

Wrestling Perspective

• Analysis and Commentary From The McLaughlin Group of Professional Wrestling •

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The Interviews

In August, we had the opportunity to interview a famous wrestler, up and coming promoters and, probably, the most famous wrestling trainer today. As a special break from our format of commentary and analysis, we decided to present a double issue of interviews. We hope you find these interviews entertaining and informative, as we enjoyed doing them.

The Wrestler - Special Delivery Jones

Philadelphia's favorite son, S.D. "Special Delivery" Jones has been an active wrestler for over 17 years, mostly with the World Wrestling Federation. He is perhaps best known as the promotion's most popular jobber of all time. In this interview with David Skolnick and Paul J. MacArthur on August 30, 1990, just moments before he was scheduled to wrestle on a Northeastern Championship Wrestling card in Oswego, NY, Jones discusses the WWF, his possible return to the company, losing matches and his experiences in Japan.

Wrestling Perspective: We haven't seen you in the past two years, what have you been doing?

S.D. Jones: Two years and four months. I did a lot of overseas stuff. Right now, I have a little shake up with the WWF. I might be going back, I'm not sure. I might be going back there. I've been doing a lot of overseas work - Pakistan, Australia. I just got back from the Caribbean five or six days ago.

WP: How did you do down there?

SD: Pretty good. I'm trying to put something together to go back there. I'm trying to work with some promoters.

WP: With Johnny (Rodz) and a couple of other guys?

SD: No, with the local guys in St. Martin, St. Croix.

WP: So what happened when you left (the WWF) two years ago?

SD: It was just time. I did 16 years there. I went there when I was a very young boy and I'm getting old. So I just felt it was right for me to back out for a while. Now all the old guys, all my friends, are going back so I think I'm going to go back maybe for another two years. Tony's (Atlas) back.

WP: So how did you break into wrestling?

SD: I used to box at Gleason's Gym and I just wouldn't leave the weights alone. So I kept on lifting weights and moving from class to class to class, and they told me to get out of there because they can't do anything. I switched over to weight lifting and I met this guy called The Fat Man who was - he had a kid boxing in Texas and his trainer didn't show up. He was smoking a cigar at the gym and I had a beef with him so he cursed me out and called me a musclehead. So I said "I'll take that guy 10 rounds if you give me \$100." He looked at me and laughed and said "Come on." I went in and I went 12 rounds with him. This

was in '73, I was a kid. He paid me and gave me a card and said "You better go into wrestling school." "I don't want to box anymore I told him," I went to the school and I met Johnny Rodz, Lou Albano and some other guys.

WP: Who trained you?

SD: Actually, Johnny Rodz, Lou Albano and a guy from Romania - a Romanian weightlifter - an older guy - he's dead now.

WP: And that's when you broke into the WWF?

SD: Yes. I changed my real name to S.D. "Special Delivery" Jones. Everyone knows that's not my real name. It worked. It was good for me and I can't complain. It's been 16 going on 17 years. I've seen the world three times or better. I love this sport and I made money so I can't complain. So now it's my time to help others.

WP: The sport's really changed during the past few years.

SD: It is. We do a lot of show matches - sports entertainment - more entertainment than sports right now. It changes over because one time they say we're too violent for the kids. We're teaching them how to hurt each other, their families and friends and so forth. We had to stop that completely. It's working. I'd say we're drawing in the crowds.

WP: It's a total different sport than it was even just five or six years ago.

SD: We used to bang up each other like crazy. You have to entertain. If you beat on each other and you don't entertain, they boo you out. Fans are hard to please, but New York fans are the worst (laughs). You have to be able to do both. You've got to look powerful and then you have to entertain them properly.

WP: What do you think Vince has done for the sport?

SD: The guy's a genius, man. He is a genius in this field, I have to say that. He can take that door there and turn it into gold. Let's face it, everybody he puts out there - he's putting on shows all over the world and makes jillions on top of millions of dollars. He must be doing something right.

WP: You know him personally?

SD: He's a good friend. I have no bad feelings about him, honestly, he's a good man. In fact Tony Atlas was talking to him a few weeks ago and he asked how am I doing; when is he coming back my way.

WP: What are they going to be doing with Tony?

SD: I don't really know yet. I haven't seen him on the tube yet so I can't see what's going on. He's always been a good one. At one time, he had the biggest arms in the business and he is still one of the strongest. He does 680 on the bench, I saw it for myself in Troy, New York.

WP: Do a lot of traveling with him?

SD: Yeah, we we're together 80-81-82-83. We were tag team partners.

WP: And then you did the six-man with Rocky (Johnson).

SD: And Rocky came in and six-man's against the Samoans. He's a personal friend too. When he got married one time I gave him away. We're very close friends. We still talk, in fact, we spoke last week.

WP: Any memorable moments in the 16 years?

SD: A lot of things have happened in the sport. I had a great time in this sport. I met a lot of people -

very educated people, smart people, very rich people, real poor people, real hard people, very nasty people. I went right through the whole scene. It was school.

WP: How about the traveling?

SD: It's still there. It's good, I like it.

WP: Are you glad you broke in?

SD: If I had to do it, I'd do it all over again.

WP: If not wrestling, what else would it have been?

SD: Everybody asks me that. Before this, I was working ITT, telephone communication. I can splice cable, I shoot trouble (doing a repair routine) - When your line is broken, I put my headphones up, I put my machine up, I have a little set and I listen for your sound. I would go up on my ladder and open up the wire and put them together. I put a thing we call a sleeve in and put some sawdust in tight and put it back together. Call you and say the number is 784-5620 - I say "hello" and they say "hello, thank you very much." I did that for a while. When I started as a kid in Puerto Rico. I'm from Antigua in the West Indies, but I grew up in St. Croix. Then they took a lot of us in Puerto Rico to a training school for that.

WP: How did you end up in Philly?

SD: I moved up here to go to Wagner College. Then my family moved out of New York. Then I went to Monsoon and also Johnny Rodz.

WP: What was your major in college?

SD: Same thing - communications. I dropped out.

WP: Making more money in wrestling?

SD: I could have finished, but Vince sent me to California. The old man (Vince McMahon Sr.) sent me to California to get polished up. I was out there and I wanted this... the old man is great. The young one, they both never did a bad thing to me. I have nothing to say about that family. They didn't treat me bad, they didn't push me around, they didn't lie to me. Now today, the kid, I can call him tomorrow and I know he'll take me back so I cannot say nothing bad about him.

WP: What's it like to lose every night?

SD: Whatever I do, the fans will support me. It's amazing, here's a guy who loses six out of 20 matches. People don't see when I win, you see when I lose. Fans give me their support so there's got to be something. When I go to the Garden and I lose a match all the guys give me a standing ovation - stand on their chairs. (For the record, SD won his match that night against Mondo Kleen.)

WP: When Bundy squashed you at Wrestlemania I, they cheered you.

SD: I got up. When I got up after smack (claps hands together) - they cheered.

WP: Who else were you close with in the WWF?

SD: My favorite guy really and truly was Tito Santana. He was my roommate on the road. Many times we rode together. Many times we rode together and trained together. A hell of a guy to be around.

WP: He's an excellent tactician.

SD: He's pretty good in his field. He played pro ball for Kansas City and for Calgary; he played Canadian ball.

WP: What about Rick Martel?

SD: I know him, but not like Santana.

WP: So we might expect to see you soon?

SD: I hope so. I'm not done yet. I'll do it another two or three years.

WP: So what's next?

SD: I'm going to Guam in September. Then I'm going back to the Caribbean. We were supposed to, thank God (hands praying), to be over in the Middle East now in Iran. You never know what might have happened. The promoter said to hold off for a bit. I guess he knew something was happening.

WP: Interested in training once you get out?

SD: Yeah, I don't want to take. I see some of the guys who are doing it in the business and a lot of guys are charging. They get money to train the kids, but I don't want to do that. I want to have maybe a YMCA or club or something. If somebody looks like they can do it, I'll just take them to McMahon or whoever else can give them the right push. I don't want to take anyone's money.

WP: How was it working for the ICW?

SD: It's fun. I've known those guys from the old days. The Savoldis - their father was my agent for many years. I know those guys and it's nice working with them. They know I'm doing other things so they leave me alone to do what I want. They ask me if I want to come back to them. We're all friends. We help each other out.

WP: A lot of the independent promotions, the promoters are guys from years gone by.

SD: A lot of times I turn things down. They call me, but I have to work at other places. They call a lot. One of these days, one of those small guys are going to click. One of the small promoters are going to succeed.

WP: What do you think of the UWF (Herb Abrams' new promotion).

SD: Ahh, you like that, huh? I was at the convention last Saturday over there (referring to John Arezzi's convention, August 25&26).

WP: What do you think of their chances?

SD: It's hard to say. Sometimes a business immediately zooms. Some sound good and they bomb out. With business, you never know. One night you may come out here and everybody sits there and watches you because they buy tickets because they want to help the school. The next time you go to another town, they're all rowdy, making noise and it doesn't come off. I wish them well. They are my friends also. One of the sales reps, Mark(Sotichack), he was working for Vince and we worked together.

WP: He used to fill in for one of the Executioners when one no-showed.

SD: Right. So you know, like I said, a small independent can work.

WP: Do you enjoy working for independents more than the WWF?

SD: It's more professional working for the WWF. You're working for a big office, a big company you're working for. These guys are small independent wrestlers, they're less trained here. There, everything is down to the tee and timed. Everything is ding, ding, ding, ding. You have to be thinking about everything. Here you can just let go. In the WWF, you got to go down there and do an interview, they give you two minutes to do this and you can't (foul up). When you come back from the interview, you

have to do an interview for Australia. "We want you to talk about the Australian football team." While they're wrestling, they've got to come up with this. You don't have nothing in front of you either.

WP: Are the interviews scripted in the WWF? We've heard a lot of people say that they're scripted.

SD: They don't have cards; not when I'm there. They give you about 45 seconds and you've got to talk about wrestling in California in that time.

WP: They give you just a premise. They say "you're going to be wrestling SD Jones, talk about it."

SD: Time and place. That's what they give you. Time and place. The guy says that he wants it done in 10 seconds, you've got 10 seconds to finish up. If you're in the middle of this conversation, you've got to be smart enough to shut off.

WP: Do you have a guy telling you to wrap it up?

SD: Yes. I've never see that (cue cards) unless it started two years ago. Nobody usually does that.

WP: What promoter did you work for in Japan?

SD: I was with Inoki, the Inoki office. It was Bad News Brown, myself and Abdullah The Butcher against Hulk Hogan, Fujinami and Inoki. I did that for four to five weeks during January 1984. When I go now, it's for a new office they've got over there - Tenryu's office.

WP: Tenryu's - the SWS.

SD: That's what I'm trying to get something signed with (hands praying).

WP: Do they treat you well in Japan?

SD: Yeah, they set you up in a hotel. When I'm finished at night time, if I don't have a good friend, I go my way because I know certain places to go. I know where to eat. I get to eat at a Korean barbecue and drink beer. Then I come back.

WP: The wrestlers are treated quite differently in Japan. They're treated with a lot of respect.

SD: They put us up in Kiao Plaza. Only one problem I have there, I'm on the 47th floor. That feels like it's swaying (laughs). It's nice. They treat you very good. They give you a bus with a television.

WP: What's the culture like? You don't speak Japanese.

SD: A lot of people speak English.

WP: You tour with other guys also?

SD: You're with more guys, but everybody knows where to go over there because everybody's been there more than one time.

WP: Do they invite you or do you say you're interested?

SD: I tell one of their guys, "Come on, let me show you something." So I take you and show you what I can do. They take who they want. They watch you and see you more than one time, two or three or four times. They see if you're a crazy guy, a trouble maker. They pay attention to you and they're tough.

WP: Is it difficult to work with a Japanese wrestler if they don't speak English at all? How do you communicate?

SD: It's a little different. They move faster. They're small and they're fast. You pick up one and drop him,

and you look around and he's right there. And they're in better shape.

WP: Is Fujinami as awesome as they say?

SD: He is. He is very good. I had a great time. I tossed him around (laughs).

WP: Well, we'll let you go. Thank you very much.

The Promoters - Herb Abrams & Arnold Ross

The Universal Wrestling Federation seemed to take form overnight. Without one match taped, the company reportedly signed a one-year deal with Sports Channel America. In this interview conducted by David Skolnick on August 25 at the First Annual Wrestling Fan Fantasy Convention only hours before a press conference to tell the world about the new promotion, UWF principal owners Herb Abrams and Arnold Ross discuss their company, competing with other wrestling promotions and their plans to make the UWF the next major force in wrestling.

Wrestling Perspective: How did this come about? It just came out of the blue. All of the sudden we see in the newsletters that the UWF is forming.

Arnold Ross: This has been a concept that's been in the process now for over three years. It's only in the past year that we've actually sat down and started negotiating contracts. We have just successfully obtained a national television contract with Sports Channel America which has been cleared nationally and will be shown on national television beginning October 1. It will be a prime time, one-hour program shown during the week and a weekend replay. We will be based in our primary locations from Denver to the West Coast. We expect to be on Pay-Per-View in approximately six to eight months although we have not finalized the formal dates yet. We are attracting individuals from all of the major federations. Individuals who are coming to us, and they're many of the people that you'll recognize. The fact you have seen (Dan) Spivey and B. Brian Blair here should give you an example of the caliber of people we have.

WP: So it's a 13 week run?

AR: It is a 52 week per year run. We will be running every single week. Initially on Sports Channel American. We intend to produce other shows for other non-Sports Channel America television networks. We expect to produce within our first year, a program comparable, if you will, to a Main Event like McMahon doesn't have shown on network.

WP: Any chance of syndication?

AR: Yes, very definite in a foreign sense.

WP: How long have you been in touch with Sports Channel on this?

AR: The contract was signed a few months ago. We have been in negotiations and talking with them for some time.

WP: Any chance for house shows?

AR: I'm not so sure what you mean by house shows. That means something else to me.

WP: Going to, not necessarily the Meadowlands, but to a civic center.

AR: That is where our shows are going to be done. Our shows are going to be done in those kinds of facilities but they'll be done on the West Coast. We're not just doing a television taping where we have 100 people. It's going to be done in many ways similar to the World Wrestling Federation approach to television tapings.

WP: And everything will be on TV?

AR: Everything will be on TV.

WP: So who else besides Blair and Spivey?

Herb Abrams: Steve "Dr. Death" Williams, Terry Gordy.

WP: Are these guys going to be doing this in between Japan stints?

HA: Yes. David Sammartino, Bob Orton. Today, I cannot tell you some of the other names because their contracts are still pending with the NWA, but there's about six guys from the NWA that are going to be coming to us. Guys with very big names. It's going to be very, very exciting. Very, very exciting. New, different, fresh. One of the hosts of the show is Bruno Sammartino.

WP: That's interesting. He left three years ago and for him to come back...

HA: He's the host. He does color and I do the play-by-play.

WP: What kind of experience do the two of you have?

HA: My background is a TV producer in the entertainment field. Arnold's background has been as an attorney for 20 years in Beverly Hills.

WP: So is there any actual wrestling (experience)?

HA: I started mud wrestling in Los Angeles about 15 years ago. As far as wrestling is concerned, I've been very active negotiating with Vince Sr. and Vince Jr. to participate in the WWF to no avail so this is kind of a spin-off.

WP: A lot of people are saying that since there's nothing on tape, why would Sports Channel want to (take a chance)?

HA: Because we're good at what we do.

AR: We brought to Sports Channel a concept that is very different than what anyone else is doing. I'm not going to tell you what it is. I'm going to tell you to watch it. What you will see is the best that the WWF has in terms of concept. And you will also see that whatever portion of it that you find difficult to deal with won't be present in our programs. The programs are intended to be what our motto says which is the ultimate in sports entertainment. That is what it is going to be and it's going to be very high drama. It's going to be played out in an atmosphere that's far different from what you've seen. In our view, it's going to raise the element of surprise and excitement to the fans whether they be in the audience or be it television at a far different level than that which is presently being shown on television.

WP: It seems that a lot of the guys you have with Spivey, Gordy and Williams - the kind of straight ahead rough house type of guys who don't go in for the gimmicks. Is there going to be a little mixture?

AR: Let's just wait and see. There are advantages to gimmicks, there are some advantages to not having gimmicks. Let's just say that the best of WWF, those concepts we will utilize. Those which we don't like, we won't utilize. That which the NWA does well, we will utilize. That part of the NWA we don't like, we won't utilize. That part that other independents have worked with. We have been watching every single television program and gone to so many wrestling events that we have basically written a book about what goes on in wrestling for ourselves to work with. Out of that, came three years of work in putting together how we're going to do it. It will not be like anything you've seen before.

WP: Where did the financing come from?

AR: The financing came from; you're looking at where the financing came from.

WP: Anything else?

AR: What would you like to know? We'll be happy to try to disclose to you anything you find of interest. Are we going to do overseas? Yes. Do we intend to take our guys on tour? Yes. Do we intend to penetrate the nation's market? At the right time, yes. Do we see ourselves as being in competition with the WWF? No, that's not our goal in life. Our goal is to find our own little niche, our own little market share, our own little place in the market. To offer an alternative to that which presently exists. I believe it is a viable alternative.

WP: I know McMahon Jr. tried to stop Superclash from going on Pay-Per-View. Do you see obstacles in your way?

AR: We don't view ourselves as being in competition with Vince McMahon or his organization. If he chooses to attack us by stopping... let him do whatever he wants. We made sure that we're protected. We're big boys, we're capable of taking care of ourselves. If he decides he wants to take us on that would almost lead us to believe that we are better than even we think we are. So we wish him all the luck in the world.

WP: Well, thank you very much. I appreciate it.

AR: Good luck to you.

The Trainer - Larry Sharpe

Larry Sharpe is considered by many to be the best trainer in the business. In this interview with David Skolnick on August 9, the "Pretty Boy" talks candidly about his wrestling school, his career and several stars of the past and present.

Wrestling Perspective: We've been reading that you've got a new school opening up in Ohio. I was wondering how many schools you're operating right now?

Larry Sharpe: Well, the one in Ohio is open and I'm opening one up in Baltimore tomorrow (August 10).

WP: Is Charlie Fulton involved with the one in Ohio?

LS: Yes, Charlie and I are partners in that one and he's the head trainer there.

WP: How did you get involved in training wrestlers?

LS: Well, while I was wrestling, there were always kids hanging around the locker room wanting to know how to get in the business and what they should do and where to go, and there was never really a place to go. I just came back from a tour of Puerto Rico and Buddy Rogers wanted to train his son. He was too old to actually get in the ring and show some of the things that had to be done. So he called me and asked me if I was interested in starting a wrestling school with him. So Buddy Rogers and myself started out Champion's Choice. After a few months, it was obvious that David (Rogers) could be a good wrestler, but he didn't want to wrestle at that particular time in his life. So Buddy decided to pull out and sold me his shares of the stock. I changed the name to The Monster Factory and it's been growing slowly ever since.

WP: How long ago was that?

LS: That was in '84.

WP: You had kind of cut down on your ring activity by then?

LS: Well, yes. I had just come back from Puerto Rico and I didn't see a real good place to go and make good money and be treated the way I wanted to be treated so this opportunity came by at the right time.

WP: And how has it been going? It seems to be one of the most recognizable wrestling schools in the country.

LS: Well, I think that answers the question. Obviously, I've got a good reputation so far. I've trained more

big name, big talent wrestlers than any other place in the country and I'm proud of that fact. Now we've got a school going in Marion, Ohio. We've got the school, as long as it passes inspection tomorrow (it did), it will be open in the Baltimore area this weekend, and just looking to grow.

WP: Besides Bam Bam Bigelow and the Soul Taker, who else have you trained that have hit the big time.

LS: Bam Bam Bigelow, King Kong Bundy, Virgil the Bodyguard, Tony Atlas. I assisted in training Kevin Von Erich. The trainers of Kevin Von Erich were myself, Buddy Rose and Jose Lothario.

WP: What do you think of Kevin's ring work?

LS: It's adequate.

WP: You've trained better?

LS: Yes.

WP: Who would you say is the best student you ever had?

LS: I would say Bam Bam Bigelow was probably the most natural. Of course you know when he came to the Monster Factory, he had a full head of hair. I talked him into shaving it and tattooing the flames on his head. So you know that kind of gave him a little bit of edge as well. But, to be perfectly frank with you, some of the best wrestlers that I've turned out are only wrestling in minor league circuits like Memphis and some of your part-time organizations just because of their size. I can actually and honestly say that as we speak, there are better matches going on in the Monster Factory ring right this minute than people will see at NWA and WWF house shows.

WP: What qualities do you look for in a wrestler when you want to train (them)?

LS: You have to look at each wrestler as an individual. Some come in here with tremendous size, others come with great attitudes. Lots of times wrestler come in and think that they have the world's greatest gimmick. Well, that's the last thing that we worry about at the Monster Factory. Our job is to teach the basics which Charlie Fulton is an expert, myself as an expert and the fella that's training people in the Baltimore Monster Factory, Barry Hardy, is a good technician. Unfortunately for wrestling, and unfortunately for himself, he's got a very good job that (doesn't) allow him to leave and that the gamble that you need to take to go out and make your name to become a professional wrestler. He's a great technician and he has a good attitude about the business. What we try to do is first you learn the wrestling and then we'll worry about if you need a mask or you need glitter or if you need shimmer cloth or you need sequins or you need rhinestones. That's the last thing we come around to.

WP: So getting back to Bigelow, his in-ring work was very good...

LS: Yes.

WP: ...and this was just something to get him more attention.

LS: Exactly.

WP: What do you think of his ring work right now.

LS: I don't think it's what it could be. I saw a match between him and Tim Horner in the NWA and, even though the match was good, I would have to say that Tim Horner looked like a heavyweight contender for the championship for the stamina that he showed and the agility he showed against Bigelow. I know when I was his manager, not saying anything about Humperdink because I think he's doing a fine job, but I just don't think Bam Bam is performing at his peak.

WP: Do you think he is better in Japan? Have you seen his Japan work?

LS: Yes, I've been to Japan with him, but I haven't been with him recently and I'm sure that, I don't want to pat myself on the back, but I'm sure that his Japan work is fine but it could be better too.

WP: Also the Soul Taker, you trained him. He's in Japan right now isn't he?

LS: He's back now.

WP: What do you think of his work?

LS: He's got a long way to go, but he has good potential.

WP: So how does someone enroll in your school?

LS: Depending on the part of the country they want to train in, they can all call me here (609-423-8255) and I'll refer them to Charlie Fulton in Ohio or Barry Hardy in Baltimore, and my former tag team partner, Jack Evans will probably be opening one up in Georgia and that will be after the first of the year, maybe even the Spring that we're working on because I have to get Jack back use to the training techniques that we go by here at the Monster Factory. All they have to do is contact me, we'll give them a tryout which is basically an agility test because we guarantee students their first match. I don't want to take anyone's money and then have to give it back. So I want to make sure that they're trainable before we take them. So anyone that is interested in becoming a wrestler basically all they have to do is call the magic number and if they have it, we can hook them up.

WP: How much does it cost?

LS: Right now it's \$3,000 but it may go up to \$3,500 after the first of the year. It's not a definite price increase though.

WP: How long is the camp?

LS: Until they have their first match, whether it takes four months, six months, eight months, two months.

WP: What's an average usually?

LS: An average is four to six months.

WP: How many wrestlers do you train in a year?

LS: Probably 30. Now with the Monster Factory in Baltimore and Ohio, it would be nice if it went to 90.

WP: What can a person expect to go through at the school?

LS: Crowd psychology, agility drills, wrestling drills, standing holds, takedown holds, reversals, counter-reversals. Everything that they need to know in order to become a complete professional. People don't leave here as main-eventers. They still have their dues to pay, but I can guarantee them that they will leave here more qualified than they will any place else in the world.

WP: Pretty grueling workouts?

LS: Yes. An hour and a half a night is all it takes.

WP: Why would someone want to become a wrestler? Is it worth it - all the pain, the traveling?

LS: It depends on what they're in it for. Some guys are in it for the groupies, some guys are in it for the money, some guys are in it for the glory. Depending on where their values lie would be whether or not it was worth the training for it.

WP: What's more important, in ring charisma or actual wrestling knowledge and ability?

LS: To start, actual wrestling ability. But, of course, you're going to have to develop charisma. But you can have all the charisma in the world, if your wrestling is not up to par, you're not going to go as far.

WP: You guarantee one match, one professional match. Anything beyond that?

LS: Well, they'll get names and addresses of promoters and who to contact and where to send their pictures. We make videos of their matches, we teach them how to do interviews, but basically, the Monster Factory is just like any other school. When you graduate from Harvard Law School, they don't go out and find you customers. They don't go out and find you a law firm. They shake your hand and say "Good luck." I believe I do more than that for my students because I try to follow them and help them as much as I can, but I can't become everyone's manager in the same breath.

WP: Are you managing anyone right now?

LS: I've got several people under contract.

WP: The Pitbulls?

LS: Yes.

WP: Are they down in Memphis now or doing independents?

LS: Right now, I'm negotiating with a couple of different organizations that I really can't say too much about the Pitbulls other than they have a very bright future ahead of them.

WP: They went on a New Zealand tour, right?

LS: They've been on several.

WP: Do you actively promote?

LS: I was partners with Dennis Coraluzzo, who is the owner of Excalibur Promotions, and we co-promote things together.

WP: Still get in the ring every now and then?

LS: Occasionally. If I have another one or two matches in my career, that will be it.

WP: How long did you wrestle professionally?

LS: Since 1974.

WP: Until, when did you retire?

LS: I haven't officially retired yet, but I would say that this year will be my retirement year.

WP: More money in training than wrestling?

LS: No, it's just that at the age of 40, I don't feel I'm as capable in a ring as I was in the past few years and I don't want to go out having sloppy matches or having people holler "boring" or people think that I'm lazy. I would rather bow out gracefully and that's that.

WP: How did you break into wrestling?

LS: With the help of Mr. Fuji and Gorilla Monsoon.

WP: How did that come about?

LS: I'm from a wrestling town. I wrestled 10 years as an amateur. I was fourth in the nation, NCAA. Monsoon used to come to high school and watch my high school matches.

WP: Where was that, in Jersey?

LS: Yeah, and Wild Red Berry was managing Monsoon at the time and from there, the friendship grew and the relationship blossomed a bit.

WP: Are you still close with Monsoon?

LS: Well, he's a very busy man and I'm pretty busy, but, you know, we're business associates. I guess you could say.

WP: And how did you get the "Pretty Boy" nickname?

LS: Vince McMahon Sr. gave it to me.

WP: What do you think of Sr. or what did you think of Sr.?

LS: Just another guy with a lot of money that I worked for.

WP: What about Jr.?

LS: He's the same (laughs). I have no qualms about working for either one of them. In fact, I just got a nice little cash payment from one of them today and I appreciate it and hope to continue to work with him.

WP: So do you recommend your guys to the WWF?

LS: No, actually, like I said, when they leave here they're on their own and I hope they can work for anyone. I don't care if it's the NWA, the WWF or the AWA or the WWA. They're on their own. I wish them well, but I would not pick one company against another as far as my students go. I have my preferences of who I think is best, but that's immaterial to sending a student out to work.

WP: What were some of the more memorable moments during your career?

LS: Nothing in particular. I like to travel and the travel was excellent. I got to live in Hawaii, Puerto Rico and had maybe eight or nine trips to Japan. Of course, New Zealand and Canada. There's no wrestler that really impressed me that much more than another wrestler. I would say I liked my matches against Wahoo McDaniel 10 years ago. I thought they were good matches, but I feel I've had plenty of good matches. He's just one character in particular that I liked to wrestle.

WP: Who was the best worker you ever faced?

LS: (pause) I've wrestled lots of good workers. To come up with just one off the top of my head, I really can't do that.

WP: Any future stars on the horizon coming out of your school?

LS: Well, right now I would say that the Pitbull Express is the one people should keep their eyes on. I have tryouts once a month. There's a young man, Ron Smiley training at the Monster Factory in Ohio who's a bodybuilder, took number four in the Mr. Ohio contest last year, and he looks like he's got a bright future ahead of him. He's a very young man, but he's got a long way to go.

WP: What's your opinion of the sport today?

LS: It's changed over the years - financially for the better, for the good of the sport, I can't say. People

respect wrestlers more now than they ever have. I think that they understand where it's coming from and approach it from a different level. I would have to say that if it wasn't for Vince McMahon, that wrestling would not be what it is today and then it would be up to the person that reads that comment or listens to that comment to decide for themselves whether or not wrestling is better off or not. But personally, I have no qualms about what he's done with the business.

WP: Do you think the NWA can turn it around?

LS: If they get rid of the bosses.

WP: Really. You don't think Ole and Herd are working out?

LS: It's too soon to tell about them in particular, but I think they need new blood all the way around.

WP: Talentwise also?

LS: Talent, yes. I think they need to be restructured from top to bottom with only a few familiar faces. Maybe, well definitely, Flair, Sting, Luger, but after that, changes have to be made.

WP: What's your opinion of Flair?

LS: One of the finest competitors in the business today. I have nothing but respect for the man.

WP: How would you compare him with let's say a Bob Backlund?

LS: I would say that Bob Backlund could have been a Ric Flair with pressing. In other words, Bob had amateur moves that people never saw. What Ric Flair knows, he let's people see. I think Bob Backlund's ability to wrestle never really (shined) through and I don't know whether that was because Bob Backlund was not a showman or whether or not that just wasn't his style, but, I think he had a lot more that he could have offered than he did offer.

WP: And the opposite would be Bruno who gave out more than he actually had?

LS: Bruno always gave 110 percent.

WP: So what do you think of Tony Atlas now that he's going back to the WWF.

LS: I think it's too soon to pass any judgment.

WP: Have you seen his work in the ICW?

LS: Yes, I have, and the quality surrounding his work will not highlight his work the way it needs to be highlighted. So I'm sure that putting him in the proper perspective, as the WWF will do, that Tony Atlas will be much more effective as a drawing card.

WP: What do you think about Greg Valentine, who for years had a similar look about him as you?

LS: I love his new look because I know he hates it (laughs).

WP: Why do you think he does it?

LS: Because he's a very smart man.

WP: Did you ever work with the Grand Wizard?

LS: Yes, he was a good friend of mine. Stayed at his home many times.

WP: So what about Oliver Humperdink?

LS: Fine manager, good talker, knows his way around the business and just always seems to be somewhere. A fine individual.

WP: Thanks. I really appreciate it.

LS: That's okay. I hope it was a good interview.

Sidelines

Thanks to Joe DiCarlo, Jim Dough, Adam Horowitz, Wade Keller, Georgian Makapoulous, Jeff Mullins, Greg Oliver and Brian Tramel for their plugs over the past two months. We appreciate their help.

A Retraction • In issue # 6 we reviewed a tape owned by Brian Tramel. That tape is not for sale and we apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused Brian and our readers.

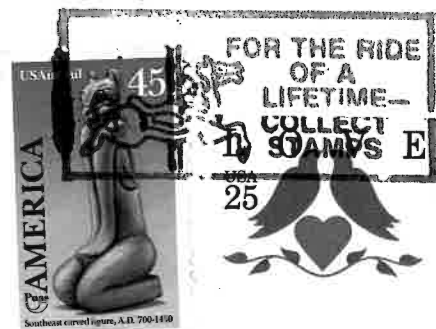
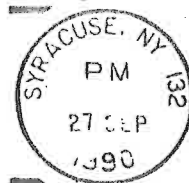
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Next Month we will be returning to our regular format with more analysis and commentary, your letters, part II of Vic Stanley's series on racism, classism and sexism in wrestling, an article by Rodney Leighton and more. Don't miss it.

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